WASHTENAW HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Founded December 19, 1857

Washtenaw Impressions

FEBRUARY, 1975

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Those of us who have had the good fortune to work with Dave Pollock for the WHS feel a great loss at his recent resignation as Vice President. However, we realize the tremendous task he has undertaken as acting President of Washtenaw Community College and we fully understand his necessity for reducing his "outside" responsibilities. He assures us he'll return to the board by the end of 1975. In the meantime, we wish him the very best and we'll miss him very much.

Tom Lacy has accepted the position of Vice President vacated by Dave. Tom is already hard at work organizing meetings and our annual tour in June, as well as performing the other duties of his new position.

Stewart Thayer, a life member, has been appointed to fill the vacancy on the board of directors.

Hazel Proctor

CANDLE–MAKING, EASTER EGG DEMONSTRATIONS SET

Candle-making and Easter egg decoration as it was done in earlier days will be demonstrated at the Ypsilanti Historical Museum on Saturday and Sunday, March 15 and 16, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Mrs. Omar Robbins and Mrs. Esther Ensign will give the respective demonstrations.

The museum is open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. Guided tours may be arranged on other days by appointment. Admission is free.

CENSUS RECORDS, CEMETERY RUBBINGS TO BE TOPICS

The Genealogy Section of WHS will meet at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, March 9, to hear Mrs. Leigh Anderson (Alloa) discuss use of census records by the genealogist. Location to be announced.

Rubbings of various kinds, especially cemetery inscriptions, will be demonstrated at the Sunday, April 20th, meeting by guest speakers from Lansing, Mr. and Mrs. Chester A. Trout. Mrs. Trout is reference librarian for the Michigan State Library at Lansing. Location to be announced.

This month genealogy group was to learn about resources available to genealogists in the Ann Arbor Public Library. Gene Wilson, reference librarian, was to speak to the group at 2 p.m. Sat., Feb. 22, at the library.

MARCH MEETING TOPIC

Frank Wilhelme, director of Historical Society of Michigan will speak on "Royal S. Copeland - Mayor of Ann Arbor" at 8 p.m. March 20 at Ann Arbor Federal Savings & Loan

JUMP IN YOUR 'MERRY OLDSMOBILE' AND COME TO FEBRUARY MEETING

Rumble-seat romance and the getaway car will come into focus when David L. Lewis, U-M professor of business history, takes "A Look Through the Rear-view Mirror" at the February meeting.

The meeting will be at 8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 27, in Liberty Hall in Ann Arbor Federal Savings & Loan, Liberty at Division Sts.

Prof. Lewis will take a lighthearted look at the impact of the automobile on our life style and everything around us, including its effect on romance and courtship and banditry.

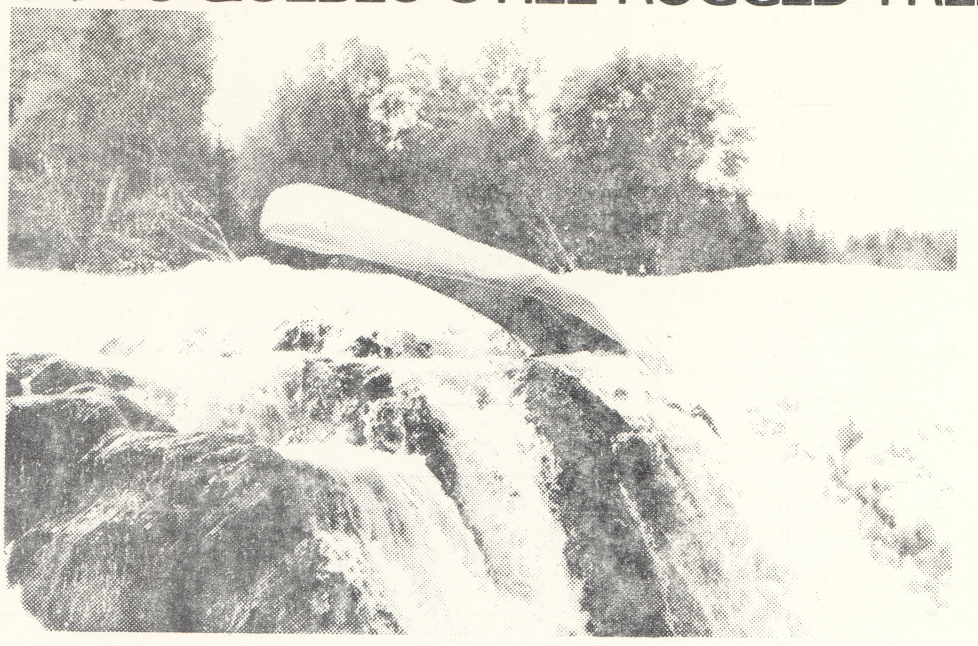
IN MEMORIAM

Two former WHS officers recently passed away within a day of each other, Herbert S. Hicks of Ann Arbor and Clare Rorabacher of Whitmore Lake.

Mr. Hicks, 77, who formerly owned Atwell-Hicks, Inc., civil engineering firm, served two terms as president of the society. Many members have fond memories of the Hicks' gracious hospitality to the society and board at their summer cottage at Half-Moon Lake.

Mr. Rorabacher, 79, was a retired rural mail carrier and former Northfield township treasurer. An area vice-president of WHS for Whitmore Lake from 1963-69, he wrote a history of the Methodist Church there as well as papers on the cemeteries and naming of the lake. Poor health prevented his attendance at society meetings in recent years.

ARNOLD'S MARCH TO QUEBEC STILL RUGGED TREK



CANOE IRRETRIEVABLY LODGED IN ROCKS

Retracing Benedict Arnold's ill-starred march on Quebec is still a rugged adventure almost 200 years later although some of the hazards are different now.

Douglas W. Marshall, curator of maps and newspapers at the University's Clements Library, who participated in the more recent trek, gave an illustrated talk about it at the January meeting of the Washtenaw Historical Society.

Arnold, not a traitor until several years later, had seized Ft. Ticonderoga with Ethan Allen earlier in 1775. Then George Washington put him in charge of the Quebec expedition. Arnold set off with 1,000 men late in September.

As Arnold and his men had done, the U-M party of six went from Newburyport, Mass., to Pittston, Me., by ship in the summer of 1973. There they started up the Kennebec River by canoe from the same farm and sawmill where Arnold had obtained 200 bateaux (small boats) for his trip.

They followed the route Arnold took, 90 miles up the Kennebec, over the "Great Carrying Place" to the Dead River, then over the border at the "Height of Land", and 120 miles down the Chaudiere and Etchemin Rivers to Quebec.

In Maine they found Arnold something of a hero. A lake, a rock and a motel are named for him as well as a river in Canada. The Arnold Expedition Historical Society of Gardiner, Me., met them at the start of their trip. Next fall, they learned, the Arnold Society, 600 strong, will re-enact Arnold's march on the 200th anniversary.

Arnold's expedition had many problems. The boats, hurriedly made of green wood, leaked. He got a late start and ran into ice, snow, a hurricane, Indians, illness and starvation, not to mention the hostile English at Quebec.

Marshall's group made the trip in 19 days compared to 46 for Arnold. However, they found the trip still a test of physical stamina, especially the miles-long double and triple portages necessary to move canoes and their 90 pound backpacks. Some of the portages were uphill. One day they progressed only four miles across a swamp.

Neither were the rivers all smooth paddling. They encountered rapids and waterfalls like Arnold, but unlike him they also had to cope with pollution, about 15 dams and massive log booms, especially on the Kennebec.

The first 90 miles up the Kennebec were all upstream, of course, quite a challenge in itself for usually desk-bound scholars.

From shore, some of the Mainers, or "Mainiacs" as some call them, would call out in a friendly down East accent, "You're going the wrong way!" Marshall related.

Confronted by a river full of logs, they had to walk their canoes along steep rocky banks to get around them. Once around the booms, they often found themselves dodging four-foot logs, hurtling down the river on strong currents.

The dams presented difficult currents and portages that Arnold didn't have. Also Arnold's men could drink and fish from the river but the U-M party found the water not safe to swim in let alone drink. Canadian towns dump untreated sewage directly into the rivers. Industry pollutes the Kennebec. No amount of Halazon could purify the water of chemical pollution, Marshall noted. It only acts on the biological impurities.

At the Great Carrying Place the three ponds were clear and drinkable. Here they met the only other canoe party on the trip, a group of high school R.O.T.C. candidates.

In a shallow rocky section of the Dead River where they had to wade and drag or push their canoes nearly 14 miles, Mike Bennett slipped and fractured his kneecap and had to leave the trip. It was

40 miles to the nearest medical care.

Because of his leaving, one fiberglass canoe was left at the border. One night while the group slept along the Chaudiere River, the river rose and swept the remaining two aluminum canoes into a waterfall five miles below. A local kayak club tried unsuccessfully to lassoo the one lodged in the rocks. The other, though battered, was retrieved and beaten back into shape at a body shop. On the rest of the trip they took turns paddling and walking by road.

Near where Bennett hurt his knee, about 400 of Arnold's men turned back. Near where the U-M group lost a canoe, several of Arnold's canoes capsized and were swept over the falls. Only one of Arnold's original bateaux made it to Quebec and also only one of the modern ones.

At Quebec, they arrived a day earlier than expected, fouling up plans of two Canadian television film crews but making the front page of Le Soleil (newspaper). They had a friendly reception except for the guard who pushed them away as they ran up an American flag in the fort.

Unfortunately for Arnold, he didn't surprise the British. They had intercepted his communications with French Canadian supporters and were ready for him. Then all he could do was lay seige to Quebec. Gen. Montgomery arrived to assist him after taking Montreal. Finally the two American generals attacked the last day of 1775 because some of their troops' enlistments expired the next day.

Montgomery was killed and Arnold wounded, though he escaped. The British took several hundred prisoners.

Had Arnold succeeded Canada might now be part of the U. S. Even though he didn't the march is still one of the most extraordinary military adventures of the 18th century.

Arnold had launched into scarcely known wilderness without reconnaissance maps, Marshall noted. Even in 1973, Marshall, the cartographer for the trip, added details to the maps.

PIONEER SOCIETY MET ALL DAY IN 1875, HEARD PAPERS LATER USED IN CHAPMAN'S COUNTY HISTORY

By Nan Hodges

If you were forty years old and had lived in Washtenaw County twenty-five years in 1875, you were considered a "pioneer" and eligible to join the Washtenaw County Pioneer Society, forerunner of the Washtenaw County Historical Society.

The Pioneer Society had been founded in 1873 for the purpose of preserving the biographical, statistical, and historical records of the county. In the minutes of the all-day meeting on Monday, February 1st 1875, written in beautiful script by C. A. Chapin, Recording Secretary, we can see how the Pioneer Society encouraged the recording of local history.

"Washtenaw County Pioneer Society, Warner's Hall Dexter, Monday Feb'y 1st 1875. The Society met pursuant to adjournment in the Village of Dexter. In the absence of the proper officers the meeting was called to order by Mr. Wm A. Jones, Vice President, for the Town of Dexter. The minutes of the meeting on December 7th were read & approved. On motion of Dr. Gray, Mr. Jeremiah D. Williams read the continuation of the history of the Town of Webster (second part). On motion of Mr. J. G. Koch, Mr. Jacob Preston, now of Grass Lake, read an interesting paper on the early settlement and history of the Town of Freedom."

At this point let's listen to an interesting description of German families in the township from Jacob Preston's paper: "The German settlers were very industrious. Their wives brought up as tillers of the soil, were great helps to their husbands, in the field. Caring more for their farms, than their house work, more for their cattle than their babies, and their economy in dress enabled them to devote much time to such business. They even boasted that they could 'beat the hired man in his swath any day'. One woman said 'its only the child lying in the shade, hinders me from raking and binding all a man can cradle in a day.' They were proud of their achievements in the field. They sheared sheep and drove high spirited teams better than the men. Many of these Germans began poor but frugality and persevering industry enabled them to amass fortunes."

"On motion the thanks of the Society was voted to Messrs. Williams and Preston for their very entertaining and interesting papers. On motion the Society adjourned to meet again at half past one clock P.M.

Afternoon Session

The Society met pursuant to adjournment and was called to order by the Chairman. On motion the paper prepared by Mr. John L. Clements now of Ada, Kent Co., was read by Mr. McMillan, Editor of the Dexter Leader. This paper was on the early history of the Town of Lima. Mr. Morell Goodrich of the Town of Lima presented and read a paper on the Towns of Lima and Dexter."

Mr. Goodrich described what it was like for Easterners to move into a rude cabin in Dexter in 1827: "The next day after staying with the kind Doctor C. Nichols and lady over night, we boys, with the Doctor for our guide, took a tramp or walk up to father's farm, situated about one mile west of Dexter village. On arriving there we found a man by the name of

PIONEER SOCIETY (Cont.)

George Laferty and a boss carpenter, putting in some fancy door frames and doors, and window frames, made out of the rough boards of our white oak trees, The size of the house was 16x24 feet; it was a fine looking building for my father and family to inhabit, after leaving our fine place east,--we were all of good pluck and stood it well, all but mother. It looked more to me like a hog pen, than it did like a house for human beings to live in. They had dug a hole under the house for a cellar, and had left the dirt from four to six feet high in front of the doorway and all around the house, and no way of getting into it, even from the hole in the logs to make a doorway. Very much in this situation the family found the house when they arrived here with their goods; the door was not hung on the hinges in its place, nor the windows fitted in their places. We boys went to work and leveled down the dirt around the doorway, so that mother and the family could pass in by stooping very low; this was heart rending, even to our hardy Green Mountain pioneers."

"On motion the Society adjourned to meet in the Village of Chelsea on Wednesday April 7th, 1875.

C. A. Chapin
Recording Secretary

Addition to the minutes: Mr. C. F. Almendinger presented a gavel, made from one of the logs of the School House mentioned in minutes of Dec. 7th, 74. Mr. Luther Palmer presented a piece of hand rail and cap to newel post, made from the black walnut tree mentioned in Mr. Williams paper on the Town of Webster. This tree was 7 feet in diameter."

Out of the enthusiastic reminiscences of these members of the Pioneer Society came the record of wildlife, environment, vital statistics (1st death, marriage, birth, house, etc.), industry, and agriculture which is so important in studying pioneer life in Michigan. It was this type of material from which the History of Washtenaw County (1881), compiled by Chapman, was written. Are we doing so careful a job, 100 years later, of recording our experiences in Washtenaw County?

The minutes of the Pioneer Society (1873-1929) and some of the original papers on township history given at these early meetings are among the Washtenaw County Historical Society papers in the Michigan Historical Collections at the Bentley Library. It would be an interesting project to find all of the original manuscripts or the published accounts of them in the local press.

NEW VICE–PRESIDENT, BOARD MEMBER NAMED

David Pollock, vice-president of the WHS board, has resigned because of the press of duties at Washtenaw Community College where he has been named acting president.

Thomas Lacy, Sr., was appointed to the vice-presidency and Stuart Thayer to the board vacancy.

Lacy has been serving as membership chairman on the board. A native of Spokane, Wash., he has lived in Ann Arbor since 1944. He is a partner in Drury-Lacy, Inc., Advertising Agency.

Thayer, the newest board member, has a strong interest in circus history. He is president of the Circus History Association, a group with 1,200 members nationally which he helped organize. He is writing a book on the subject and is a columnist and frequent contributor to the circus association magazine.

Locally, he is a partner in Thayer-Innes Insurance Agency and a member of the Washtenaw Historic District Commission.

Pollock served 14 years on the U-M public relations staff before joining the Washtenaw Community College staff in 1966. As society vice-president he has been responsible for planning monthly programs. He also taught courses in Michigan history at W.C.C.

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Washtenaw Historical Society Meeting
FEBRUARY 27, 1975
8:00 P.M.
LIBERTY HALL
ANN ARBOR FEDERAL SAVINGS
LIBERTY AT DIVISION

Miss Eileen Harrison
322 E. Cross St.
Ypsilanti, Mi. 48197